

MiPO *esias*



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STEPHEN PAUL MILLER



THE INTERVIEW

IF YOU COULD SPEND A DAY WITH A LIVING POET YOU ADMIRE, WHAT WOULD YOU DO TOGETHER? WHAT MIGHT A PASSERBY OVERHEAR?

I'd write another play with David Shapiro. A passerby would hear me listening.

WHICH RELATIONSHIP IS MORE IMPORTANT: A) POETRY AND POLITICS OR B) POETRY AND PHILOSOPHY? WHY?

Poetry is a commodity that politics must allow and enable. (I think that's what Plato means in that for him philosophy is a contemporary way of taking poetry seriously. He's against clichéd ways of receiving poetry.) I suspect philosophy that's not an easy resource for writing and thinking poetry. Often philosophy is good at inspiring poetry (e.g., Stevens). Politics can also inspire poetry (e.g., "Art Is Boring for the Same Reason We Stayed in Vietnam"). However, politics inspiring poetry can best be mediated by philosophy. So score one for philosophy. And yet poetry can influence philosophy (Heidegger) while politics tends to use poetry for a pet. So it's a tie between poetry/politics and poetry/philosophy.

IF YOU WERE ABLE TO PLACE POETRY IN THE WORLD WHERE IT DOES NOT SEEM PROMINENT, HOW WOULD IT BEHAVE THERE?

I envision a world where everything is poetry. If there were more poetry in technology, scarcity, oppression, and ecological disaster would be lessened. We'd find immense enjoyment in the intelligences—the poetries—that technologies engender. When poetry is everything, intuition, reason, science, poetry, and scholarship all will intermingle.

WHERE WILL WE SEE YOU AND YOUR WORK IN FIVE YEARS?

I want to combine poetry and criticism so that knowledge can be advanced with the help of poetic means and the advance of knowledge feels even more poetic. I do this in a small way in "Apocalypse Here," the last poem of this MiPOesias selection. "Apocalypse Here" works as both a book review and a poem. Also check "Dunk," a poetic analysis of different poetry-criticisms in the next issue of *Lit* and my forthcoming book; "Off the Top of My Radio Head," a poem relating Radiohead/World Wide Web and The Talking Heads/graphic user interface, in the next issue of *EOAGH: A Journal of the Arts*; "Intelligent Dasein," a poem addressing Heidegger and poetry as a radical bridge between the political right

and left, in [ars poetica](#) and also in my forthcoming *Being with a Bullet*; “Row,” a poetic exploration of the Holocaust, capital, and Alan Turing’s development of computer in *The Bee Flies in May*; “I’m Trying to Get My Phony Baloney Ideas about Metamodernism into a Poem,” a poetic narrative touching on relations between World War II and the sixties in *Skinny Eighth Avenue*, excerpted in [Logos](#); “Art Is Boring for the Same Reason We Stayed in Vietnam,” a book-length poem exploring relations between “politics” as favoritism and communal innovation and the art and poetry worlds; and, also in *Skinny Eighth Avenue*, “‘The Hustle’ and Its Liquid Totems of Holocaust, Suburb, and Computer,” which micro-periodizes “The Hustle” in terms of representations of holocaust, suburb, and computer.

TELL US A STORY: WHAT DREW YOU TO POETRY IN THE FIRST PLACE? WHY DID YOU START WRITING?

As a teenager I started writing somewhat automatically in a biology class. I liked whatever it is that I wrote. I took a poetry workshop with Konstantinos Lardas, and he lauded me as being too good for the class when I handed in a poem called “Duende Notes on the Death of a Chiropractor” after my chiropractor died just before the end of the class. I lost the poem, but see the poem “Dip” in [MiPOesias](#). I recently wrote it about a time between taking workshops with Adrienne Rich and David Shapiro. Adrienne was all about meaning and smirked “you just paraphrased the poem” when I tinkered with someone else’s poem by rearranging the words to get the poem to work. I still think that kind of thing is super-important. I liked Adrienne in the sense that one loves a bad Jewish mother. She wanted to be a good mother, but she just didn’t get me. The poetry she was into at that moment was so banal. I don’t mean her poetry. She was writing some great stuff yet valued the worst of Kinnell and Merwin. Adrienne recently apologized to me for shrieking “You have to stick your hand in the fire and feel the pain, man!” at me. I wasn’t any more against pain than most poets.

When I was 21, I took a workshop with David Shapiro, and amazed me that poetry appreciation could take a more poetic tact. David “moved the chains” of what I thought possible in contemporary poetry. David was an authentic voice in the here and now who made me hear those qualities in the language around me. Before David, I didn’t hear the rolling hush in Wallace Stevens poems. I couldn’t really envision poetry beyond Pound and Eliot. I didn’t quite know how to use Williams. But in Ashbery, Shapiro, O’Hara, Schuyler, Koch, and in the poetry of musician friend name Kenneth Deifik, I could hear ongoing, almost ethical openness, reminiscent of John Cage’s notion that 20th century ethics was having a listed phone number. I didn’t write anything that David liked all that much during the course, but I went to Brooklyn College to sit in on John Ashbery’s class, talk with him

on the subway back to Manhattan, and took the first college class William Burroughs taught (he moved from Morocco to do it). I moved to South Carolina for a year to let what flowed from David's class to percolate.

While I was in South Carolina, Kenneth Deifik and I thought of the Poetry Mailing List. It was the beginning of cheap, beautiful Xerox machines. The idea was to mail a poem so it looked like a letter. Getting poems for the Poetry Mailing List gave me a reason to talk and hang with famous poets. I helped John Cage type a poem for it and Peter Schjeldahl found himself writing an amazing "letter poem" called "Dear Art of Verse" for the Poetry Mailing List after not writing poetry for years.

While contacting David for a poem, I left six poems for him, then called him up, and he called me a great poet. Wow!

Writing these poems and having David like them was for me like Einstein's 1905 spring of light when he came up with special relativity, the absoluteness of the speed of light, the relativity of time, and the basis leading to quantum physics. I was about Einstein's age. These unbelievably creative, courageously literal discoveries were wistful if focused musings and relatively easy for Einstein. However, Einstein's second wave of innovation—the general theory of relativity, curved space-time, and the logic behind more than three or four dimensions—almost literally killed him. The concentration it required left him unable to sleep or eat. He was about as old as I was when I finished my Ph.D. dissertation. The immersion of criticism into poetry in an imaginative, pressing way was my chapter two.

Einstein never finished the third wave of his creativity. I suppose just pointing to a unified field theory putting the infinitesimal and cosmically large on the same plane is in itself the third wave. So I suppose I'll be happy heralding the merging of poetry and criticism, intuition and reason.



STEPHEN PAUL MILLER

Stephen Paul Miller is a poet, cutting edge cultural critic, tenured full professor, and single dad. His books include the forthcoming *Being with a Bullet*, *Skinny Eighth Avenue*, *The Seventies Now: Culture as Surveillance*, *The Bee Flies in May*, and "Art Is Boring for the Same Reason We Stayed in Vietnam." His son just got into two amazing middle schools, probably the two best public Manhattan ones.



THE POEMS

RISE

My friend Merry invites me to a
 Brooklyn Heights July
 Fourth anti-E-voting party.
 My son and I go to the promenade with
 petition & clip board, but a nice coordinator
 pointing to
 a hidden
 esplanade spot near a launch boat says “enjoy.”
 We’re
 so close to the fireworks
 the show’s
 like a huge,
 perpetually
 rising mixed media
 canvas, the
 fireworks now lost
 souls of voting
 machines ascending before time.

HERE COMES SUNNINESS

Here comes sunniness.
 He draws a sunny color
 and becomes what he was:
 a practice:
 he always swims left,
 and stitches the binding
 of his book in a spiral.
 A precious bundle,
 the sea is his home.

NOAH

“We don’t invade Iraq for oil,”
 I tell my ten-year-old son.
 “The idea’s to interrupt their oil production so
 American and Saudi oil’s worth more — like
 Goldfinger destroying
 Fort Knox to raise
 the price of gold. Understand?”

“Yes, I understand. Do you think
 the Republicans saw *Goldfinger*?”

“Yes,” I reply.

THEORY

I can't tell you how much I hated *The Brady Bunch* — I mean without even thinking about it. I ask one of my suite-mates if he watched it. "Sure," he says. But he writes it off to a seven-year-old's taste.

He feels no nostalgia. He's leaving, and I don't get a chance to ask what he liked about it as a kid — though that might be pushy. He's a good guy. He's helpful. I have to

put it to him again though because kids aren't that easily fooled, and I want to know what premises spark his initial investment in to show.

I guess I can't understand the motivation for circumnavigating the sixties — which is what *The Brady Bunch* means to me. When I first hear

of the theatrical reenactments of *Brady Bunch* scripts on Bleecker Street, I think they're being staged by some young alternative theater

people. But now I wonder if it isn't a nostalgia driven Beatlemania type enterprise. I mean of course it can be simultaneously artsy fartsy and exploitative. I'd probably love it. My friend

Kenny thinks I invent "secret codes" about art to make a living. But I make things up — I don't obscure anything. I'm dying to get my phony baloney theory about *The Brady Bunch* off my

chest — that they are a Jamesian Golden bowl of an asshole family — a family with a crack down the middle in which Alice, the white rabbit, is the head totem tutor (note the totem

squares at the start of each show) without which the family would perish in the Sedgwickian queer wilderness of "the extend, pretend family." The Bradys are a nuclear family and an extended family in one.

Younger viewers can see the older brothers and sisters they associate with their yearning and now are free to desire.

They can walk lightly on the incest taboo implicit in the perfect sets of siblings/friends/lovers.

I think there must be a secret code to *The Brady Bunch* — one that makes it

"queer" and fun — a constant crotch to crotch/anus to everything. . . . They stand anus

BEING WITH A BULLET

The radio says
every American
owes thirty thou in
national
debt. "Don't
pay," my nine-year-old son suggests,
"till George Bush
isn't president not because
he doesn't worry about anything.
It's that he doesn't *care* about anything."

We drive by Astor
Place and "Love to Love You Baby"
comes on. "Keep it on,
it's catchy," says Noah. And what's the world
on?
Electromagnetic
being, not static
being,
being with a bullet.

SEDGWICKING THE STONE

We've done our work, and now it's disseminating,
squirting really
into another time zone where
its metabolism, so fast it's distant, catches up to us
while still young.
The verb has torn a highway
into the ignition. Eric is coming over to show me his
Bobby Kennedy tape.
New York has been wiped clean out of my eyes.
Hey, it's all about organizing an audience.
We see each other in our mail.
The consumer lines always
curve. They reach the sky like fireworks (Eve's
theory of writing) and then imperceptivity
drool back down, like the fried onions at Nathan's.

BOUNCE

John Kennedy rides his
motorcycle
through Dallas. As
shots ring out, the
bike
rises in the air,
bounces
off the moon, and
touches down
near a White
House parking in the woods.

In 1971 I see a
 dachshund
 walking
 across a bridge
 in Portland, Oregon. Poor 1971.
 “Was it definitely
 lost?” I ask my
 9-yr-old son on
 the JetBlue to
 Portland. “Was he
 wearing a
 collar?” Noah asks.
 “I can’t remember.” “If he was, he was
 lost.”
 “And if he wasn’t he was
 wild?” I wonder. “People breed dachshunds,”
 Noah explains, “There are no
 wild ones. But say
 someone can’t handle too many dachshund
 pups. They’re not wild but stray.”
 “Maybe,” I obsess, “the owner
 was behind the dachshund, but
 I don’t think the dachshund was in a pedestrian
 zone. He was walking alongside traffic
 and must have been lost. It
 was before cell phones and I’d have to find a pay phone
 on the other side of the bridge and maybe I didn’t have a
 dime....” Outside Forest
 Grove, Oregon Noah
 wants to pick up a Charles Mansonish-looking
 hitchhiker. “It’s
 against the law,” I tell him. “Why?” “It’s dangerous.” “Then,”
 Noah posits,
 “George Bush being
 president should be against the law.”
 “Yeah but people who voted for him
 thought Bush

was safer than Kerry.” “So
they’re
dangerous!” I haven’t hitched since Oregon in the early 70s.
I should have helped the dachshund.

2

Oregon opens like a can.

“Why does it rain here?”

The Jet Stream creates
moisture

or maybe

the Alaska Stream —

I think the cold meets

the heat and it sprays.

Al Roker would know.

He should, I tell Noah,

answer a question

like that everyday — ASK AL. Or it could

be called *Why It Rains in Oregon and Other Questions*.

It would work well on *Today*. After all,

Willard Scott is Oregon-like if not from there.

He’s the weather through a
scrim. Scott’s the very first Bozo
the Clown *and* Ronald McDonald (McDonald’s
fires him for being fat).

In 1990 I see Willard

walking thorough a North Carolina hub airport’s gate path and ask
him to sign coincidentally near the Mookie Wilson autograph in my
Limited, Inc Derrida book.

He writes ’n beams ’n continues walking.

“I love you, Willard,” I call, and

then read: “LOVE, Willard Scott.”

People

in Oregon

are

the

nicest," I
say to a Eugene bookstore
manager. "No
one laughs at you
here....you can be yourself"
except for
a heavy oval guy in
1972 who picks me up hitchhiking,
drives in circles,
fumes, threatens me, then
leaves me outside a Denny's at a
jug-handle I5 exit, and also
at a pretentious college bar someone
tries punching me from behind — I
don't know why —
maybe for sitting at a bar near a
black student from Nebraska
though even he seems to think I'd
done something wrong after
blocking the punch and telling me
to get out of there. Also some crazy, skinny kid
apparently thinks I'll be a pushover because I
have long hair and follows me downstairs to
a large, out of the way A&W's
bathroom, then jumps me though I
throw him around each time he comes back at me.
Oregon has its dark side. *Return of the Jedi's*
shot here, and the place has amazing pastoral action.
A Tillamook kid
gets me a jacket from his car — it's cold in August.
A day or two later I hike up Mount Hood in black dress shoes and
a light blue cotton button-down collar shirt.
Two days later I pick green beans for an Aumsville farmer
and live in a shack with a make-your-own-fire-stove where
I broil steak. Outside the shack, I
read memoirs of a blind college professor
who loves e.e. cummings. I lose some
money in town and see a grocery notice asking
the person who lost the money to call or drop by. The

kid who found it is upset when I come over. I should
have given him a reward.

The farmer, who looks like someone in
The Last Picture Show though in sunlight-drenched color, sees
me at the town's makeshift diner and offers to buy me
blueberry pie. Near a green sign saying
"Aumsville, pop. 507,"
and next to the yellow
diamond DIP warning road sign,
the farmer and his whole family
say goodbye to
me at the bus as
Diana Ross sings, "Wake me
in the morning. . . ."
I end up enrolling in a college
for a term. I somehow thought I could avoid it.
After a Portland life drawing class that Prof.
Horne takes us to, a
strong
electromagnetic pull
literally
draws me toward the model —
I still can't explain it.
I lose the model's number.
I go out with a girl named Margaret,
a classy U of O student.
I think of Oregonians as having
New England roots and feel it
in Margaret though she's
also part
Native American. Margaret
loves Tolstoy and other
Russian idealists. I think she thinks of me as
one at first. We negotiate/court
on a hillside in late spring/early summer.
She once looks as if she's coming up for air while making love.
But after I sublet her apartment
for the summer and leave it a mess, she avoids me.
The next year a mischievous New York friend, Alex,

says a mutual Oregon/New York friend, Debby, tells him I
“knocked up a girl in Oregon” and I feel incredible love and
write Margaret feeling there might be a baby.
Part of the letter becomes part of the first poem I still use —
“Tonight,”
as in “How You Look...,” Sonny Rollins’s version, and
also after the show with Johnny. I
write another part of “Tonight” during a Melville
lecture on a cold November late afternoon.
There’s always a little
autumn in Oregon and some Emerson/Hawthorne/Melville
too — you know — that English energy that morphs to
latent Dutch/Whitman/Melville/
American/New York stuff. And the Northwest Kingdom
follows a British line through New England.
Its damp roots run deep.
How odd to have British weather
so shot through our idiom and
moist air melts everything but the language that holds us.
I find poetry through
Oregon. NY just plays Oregon
in my poetry.
Margaret sends an oddly sweet reply saying I wasn’t what she thought.
When I first get to Oregon
a young blonde woman I’m sitting
with
on a rough, small town lawn
tells me as a child she accidentally
kills a boy with a rock. I always think of her when
something I do backfires on another. Who cares? I wish someone
would ask me to write an autobiography. I wish I was famous
if only for that.
I student-teach
kindergarten and
Suzanne, the teacher, Suzanne
Mi — no last name, please! — comes over to help me
pack. Man,
I manufacture naivety. I
just can’t believe what’s happening,

even while it's happening.

I think she's married and I
also think she's a
kindergarten teacher. But I'm the dull one.

It's romantic, but I never
totally get my mind off packing and
Suzanne has to work fast to get back to her spouse —
the lucky guy. I'd like to go back to that moment
and touch it up a bit. Will Oregon ever let go?
Maybe not. I walk into the house next
to Margaret's — they're connected —
near 10th and Jefferson, I
mean I'm invited in. Noah's
intrigued by the huge cigarette butt and
beer can monuments — I think
the neighborhood is shot in
Animal House, which is filmed in Eugene.

The students there
now

know about the people there in
the early seventies and tell me how to find Alice
Doyle who organized the place for a bunch of amazingly
gentle people.
I still can't forget when one of them, Jackie,
a slim, cool single mom in denim,
with a sweet boy friend also living there,
walks up to me in front of a sofa in the living
room and kisses me long and soft and hard then goes upstairs.
I wish she knew I was reading in Eugene today. Hell, I wish her
5-now-39-year-old son knew I was reading. He likes
hanging with me and once
asks, "What's a dyke?" I begin to
explain and he says, "Oh, I thought
it had something to do with Holland."
On the redeye JetBlue back
60s Yankee pitching
mainstay/groundbreaking
baseball writer Jim Bouton sits
right in front of Noah and me and

as he takes his seat looks straight at me.

“Jim Bouton?”

“Yes.” “What a coincidence,
when my son was
three he thought I
was a Yankee.”

“Who’s he?” Noah asks,

“He was on the
Yankees and LOTS of other teams.

He was a Seattle Mariner
[we’d just seen the Mariners] .”

“They were
the Seattle *Pilots* then,” Bouton
corrects me.

After Noah
falls asleep,
Bouton is
incredibly impressed
by Noah’s illustrations for
my poetry book, *Skinny*
Eighth Avenue. He can’t
believe Noah did them. “Hey,”

Jim asks, “How do you get from JFK to
Manhattan now?” He’s incredulous when I tell him
and says, “They can build a NEW Yankee Stadium but
no direct airport
mass transit?!”

RALPH KRAMDEN GETS A MOONLIGHTING JOB,
REVIEWING DANCE FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES
AND CAN NOW AFFORD A CHILD

Lotsa times Ralph wishes he could get home after 11:30
and avoid his own show.

*“You can see Ralph Kramden get home and
You can see the clock on the wall
But you can’t see his wishes.”*

Often he watches the Met game in fast-forward search,
silently so as not to wake Alice or
disturb the quiet of the building.

Still unable to sleep, sometimes he calls me in LA
and reads a poem, asking if I like a certain word
and so forth. It just so happens I find myself back in the city
on Ralph’s last birthday, a year ago today, May 8th.

Alice arranges a party for him and, when she
answers the phone, asks me over. I’ll see Ralph there.

Ralph is reading to his son, Colonel Khadafy,
and cannot speak. He

got a moonlighting job sometime
ago, reviewing dance for *The New York Times*,
and can now afford a child.

Until then the producers wanted to keep the budget down.

In retrospect, I don’t think I fit into Ralph’s world any more.

Actually, I enjoy talking to the fireman and other
civil service types at the party,

and I think they get a kick out of me,
but I never know what to say to Alice, and

I think she thinks I’m creepy, I
don’t know what it is.

FIREWALL

Hi. I do politics for the
Christian Science Monitor.
A US consul at Jeddah
turns down visas for young men
with nothing anchoring them
to Saudi Arabia
as per regulations saying
visa applicants must be
treated like immigrants.
Angry state dept superiors
override his visa rejections.
Suspecting bribes, the straitlaced consul
alerts Washington, and when he's
fired, apparently for whistle-blowing,
his world turns upside-down.
The men, he discovers, are granted
entry through a relatively innocent
“visas-for-terrorists” program.
This is the late eighties and early
nineties and the U.S. is heady
from its role in the Soviets'
Afghani debacle. The NSA wants
to hone the skills of friendly
“terrorists” by teaching them here.

The dismissed State Department consul
comes to believe some of the terrorists
issued visas responsible for the
'93 World Trade Center bombing,
and, he conjectures, 9/11 is more than
merely fortuitous for the right. Could it,
he thinks, happen “accidentally on purpose”?
It takes no expertise after all to *not* do your job
(easy perhaps for political appointees)
thus letting terrorists be terrorists. The ex-official
admits this sounds like conspiracy theory,
and to some extent is,
yet also says official versions
are other incomplete stories
you need examine.

But I don't want to have this discussion!!!

Hi. I do politics for the
Christian Science Monitor.

VACATION

This summer I hit a wall.

It becomes
harder and harder to make calls
and work on critical projects.

Depression and exhaustion slow dance.
I just want to write poems and
listen to left wing radio. On 1965 radio, Jean Shepherd
speaks of the self-replenishing,
unstoppable, metaphysical quality
of urban dirt as the irrational
smelly radical root of a New York on
the decline. It has nothing to do with poverty, Shepherd says,
it's a rich waste. The World's Fair, Shep implies,
is waste. NY's edgy when you get here but piles up...
In a 70s Bond film the bad

guy won't destroy New York
for fear people will thank him. The city seems like the dead body
Bond tosses a telephone booth's out-of-order sign on.

One of Bond's third-way, Osama Bin
Laden-prototype, surreal mafia boss, arch-fiend buds —
I think the one played by
Christopher Lee (I might be wrong) —
is obsessive-compulsive and
won't shake hands.

"If he's so afraid of germs, he shouldn't
be a criminal," says Noah.

BOWL

FOR WRITTEN ON THE TONGUE,

WKCR-FM, NEW YORK CITY

I can feel them brush beside me
but I think we should be open to
pressures vibrating between us as
a Princess telephone receiver
mixes cell phone — really
cell radio — frequencies
in a bowl just above us.
But the frequency of my voice
is preserved as it's mixed
and thus really grafted onto the frequency
modulation 89.9.

Anyone in the metropolitan area with an antenna,
tuner, and speaker
can make me out
if other frequencies don't drown out KCR's signal,
and I know that, in this regard,
I walk a plank.

I mean, you get it everywhere but the Lower East Side or maybe
I've a cheap radio —

What would it mean to get
the radio in the poem —
to put the radio signal in the poem?
A phone converts my voice to
electricity
but radio slash cell phone waves
carry my voice
on a frequency that travels
so fast it's like an oval
bridge moving
its constituent parts around
so quickly and in such a balanced
fashion
you can walk on it
without even knowing it's moving.

Radio waves compose
a space,
even when between two people,
but telephone links, even in a
conference call, are
like lines.

I note and respect
the forces of poetry.

In other words,
poems are written on
the surfaces of other poems,
or, put another way,

a poem is a room walled by
poems,
yet, on the other side of each
wall, surface, or paper
is reality — that is, the fictions
that sustain our limits —
in other words that which
concerns us — life —
distinct from the
disjunctive veritably —
the bullshit — of poetry.

What's good about the
radio is lines that
both soften and bleed —
the written law is also speech.
Both act as double prongs
through which highways of thought
loop and
context and content impregnate
one another
within a radio frequency.
Our pressures are well
known by now,
especially the one about needing

opportunities to reverberate.
We need to ooze into the poem
and occupy it
as all other poems melt it

and the individual can be trusted
to say something
because what she or he says
is an act
that responds to and sets off the waves.

APOCALYPSE HERE

A REVIEW

UNIVERSITY OF IOWA PRESS, 2006

352 PAGES

Timothy Gray's *Gary Snyder and*

the Pacific Rim: Creating Counter Culture Community

sees history as a "physical place community desires to
take" (21), or "history take two" (23), history
intersecting history history.

History is in the sky, after all; am I my job,

family, neighborhood? No, a little, but

also an idea, and Gray paints a Pacific

Northwest Asian Pacific Rim-looking. That's the

semiotic space part of the story, how the Vietnam war
turns Blakean

mental battle.

Chronologically there's the San Francisco counter

culture's history "take one" (22-31): 40s open forms of

Duncan Rexroth Spicer Everson Miles Pacifica Radio

Rexroth's haiku translations, Alan Watts and then other

California Zen variations that the Beats in a way are

one and Hippies sorta another (and really the light touch behind

Governor Reagan's

displays of force too) and 70s

cultural phenomena like Nixon in China, Buddhist

California Governor Jerry Brown, *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle*

Maintenance, and *Tao of Physics* mainstream this California

version of Asian/Native American/environmental/80s New

Age-moving spirituality.

"California's westward tilt toward the Asia-Pacific region

doubtlessly confirmed when the young governor, clad

in a suede jacket, walks silently up to the stage during one of

Snyder's poetry readings and proceeds to sit in the lotus

position" (31). Take Two history (31-37) considers

the other end of the telescope, how "poems

and poets tend to shape

the natural world, instead of the other way

around" (32)...no place without
culture. Something exciting happens, is happening, the
President is being reigned in, reality
needs a nudge to be real and poems
and poets are the unacknowledged nudgers
of the world. That's why this review's a poem.
Statements inscribe each other, stay
late, leave early, but what happens in
San Francisco flows through San Francisco,
says Gray, and, "The local history of
the San Francisco Renaissance means
much more if viewed as part of a spatial narrative,
one that includes a diverse array
of global citizens" (32), the west a window on Asia,
and Snyder goes through the window
into a Californian counter cultural horizon.
He "migrates" (chap. 1) to and through this status.
As a teen he sees the Puget Sound and Portland,
Washington and Oregon, the Great Northwest, as shifting
spatial signs, places parts of Gary Snyder's ongoing project.
Snyder sees Chinese landscape as the Northwest's Cascades,
Asia and the Great Northwest unite inner spaces.
Early logging poems emblemize simple things cut and floating,
migrating. Gray spots "hundreds of displaced butterflies."
At a press conference to announce Iraq's improved
security situation a rocket hits the building. "There's nothing
wrong," says the Iraqi President. Thousands of displaced
American rifles filter in. At this point, Snyder's early
Logging poems take in the vibrations and flow of their own
accord. Millions of escape
routes meet up on the other side of the mirror. Birds
fly over Snyder's poems as they coalesce into
little floating magnets and the electromagnetic island

landmarks guide them into chapter two—cancer
again for Elizabeth Edwards—Snyder’s second
book of poems

hinges on “translation.” Bush, says my 10-year-old
son Noah, won’t let his people tell the
truth but won’t let what they won’t say out either though
Gary Snyder interviews Han-shan
between time and space. Snyder’s elastic stone sheets of verse
enjamb their ways
downstream, the straight dope! He’s made our company proud.

Translating flows from
rock to throw to chap. three, becoming something other,
“embodying” it, Snyder now in the
Pacific rim. Something vaguely, oddly real happens--love (the
enabling impossible,
vacuum providing leverage).

We’ve been fooling around.

I’ll tell the truth: “we’ll lean on
the wall/against each other.” We’re
environmental “stew simmering on the fire” and
camp now on the chapter called
“Communing” where we heat the sun.

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